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## **Legislation getting tough on methamphetamine producers sent to governor**

**Lansing** – Legislation to increase fines and penalties for the production of methamphetamine in Michigan won the approval of the state Legislature Thursday evening.

Senate Bills 648-652, 698 and 777 provide tools for law enforcement and impose stiffer penalties for those who participate in the production of methamphetamine by owning or possessing the places, chemicals or equipment used in production of the illegal stimulant.

“Methamphetamine is highly addictive and can cause long-term problems leaving many victims in its wake,” said bill sponsor Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck Twp). “This legislation will help eradicate the problem and allow for the arrest of people possessing or transporting excessive amounts of methamphetamine ingredients. It is a key step in stopping the production of meth.”

Methamphetamine is a growing concern throughout Michigan with clandestine labs being found in rural and city areas, barns, garages, apartments, storage areas and vehicles. The production of methamphetamine can cause serious environmental risks since the toxic waste produced often is dumped in public sewer systems or directly on the ground.

In addition to the contamination, production of meth can result in fires or explosions, injuring or killing law enforcement agents and fire personnel who respond to the scene of a meth lab.

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Birkholz worked closely with local law enforcement, including Allegan County Prosecutor Fred Anderson, Allegan County Sheriff Blaine Koops, Allegan City Police Chief Rick Hoyer and Eaton County Sheriff Rick Jones, to develop this legislation. The package of bills includes provisions that:

- Prohibit the possession of more than 12 grams of pseudoephedrine (with the exception of pediatric products), a chemical used in the production of methamphetamine;
- Increase to 20 years imprisonment the maximum penalty for those owning or possessing the places, chemicals or equipment used in production of the illegal stimulant;

- More -

- Create a new crime with a maximum penalty of four years imprisonment for people who transport anhydrous ammonia in unapproved containers;
- Require inspection of property used as a clandestine lab for the production of methamphetamine to determine if there is contamination, and require public warnings if any is discovered.

“This legislation also will help protect the public from the hazards associated with meth production, including toxic waste pollution and contamination and destruction of public places, especially residences,” Birkholz said. “Homes where meth has been cooked are considered hazardous waste sites, so no one can live there and the homes can’t be sold. Stopping meth production and preventing contamination will benefit everyone.”

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